

URGENT ACTION

500 FAMILIES LIVING WITHOUT SHELTER

800 families were forcibly evicted from private land in the south of the city of São Paulo on 24 August; more than 500 families, including the elderly and babies as young as 1 month old, have only plastic sheeting to sleep under.

On 24 August, 240 riot police entered the Olga Benário occupation in Capão Redondo, São Paulo, to carry out an eviction order in poor weather conditions. There were no representatives of state or municipal authorities present and the police did not try to negotiate with the families. During the eviction the police used rubber bullets, tear gas, helicopters and bull dozers to disperse the families and clear the area. Fires broke out across the settlement and there were scenes of panic as residents tried to help children and the elderly escape safely. Many families lost all of their possessions and personal documents as they did not have time to clear their houses.

Residents and members of a local NGO claim that police fired rubber bullets at point blank range and that the fires that broke out during the eviction were caused by teargas canisters. A police spokesperson has stated that the police were responding to resistance from residents who tried to stop the eviction by erecting barricades, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at the police. Three residents were seriously injured during the eviction.

Over 500 families, including 200 children, are now homeless, living under plastic sheeting on a site opposite the one from which they were evicted. They are living without blankets or adequate shelter in cold, wet conditions. After several days' rain, the site has turned to mud and is infested with rats. Despite repeated pleas from local NGOs, the municipal authorities have offered only mattresses – which were deemed impractical because of the mud - and food, which was difficult to deliver and to cook on site. Emergency assistance is being provided by NGOs and a local church.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY:

- Expressing concern that 800 families were forcibly evicted from the Olga Benário occupation in Capão Redondo, São Paulo, and left homeless, and that more than 500 families are now living in completely inadequate conditions;
- urging the municipal authorities to immediately provide emergency relief including food, water and access to medical assistance to people who have been made homeless as a result of the forced eviction;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all the families who were forcibly evicted are provided with adequate alternative accommodation and compensation for all losses and guaranteed the right to an effective remedy;
- expressing concern that municipal authorities did not take all measures to prevent the excessive use of force prior to the eviction and were not present to oversee its implementation;
- calling on the authorities to cease all forced evictions immediately, and implement a long-term, detailed housing policy to address homelessness in São Paulo.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 07 October 2009 TO:

Mayor of São Paulo
Exmo. Prefeito de São Paulo, Sr.
Gilberto Kassab
Viaduto do Chá 15, Centro - Edifício
Matarazo
01002-020 - São Paulo/SP, BRAZIL
Fax: **+55 11 3113.8015**
Salutation: **Vossa Excelência/**
Your Excellency

Federal Human Rights Secretary
Exmo. Ministro da Secretaria
Especial de Direitos Humanos
Sr. Paulo Vannuchi, Esplanada dos
Ministérios, Bloco T, 70064-900 -
Brasília – DF, BRAZIL
Fax: **+55 61 3226 7980**
Salutation: **Vossa Excelência/**
Your Excellency

And copies to:
The Homeless Movement of Central São
Paulo
Movimento Sem-Teto do Centro,
Avenida São João, 1495 - 2º andar,
Metrô Santa Cecília
São Paulo, SP, CEP 01211-000,
BRAZIL

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

São Paulo has a chronic shortage of housing for low-income families. A well organised homeless movement has been squatting empty buildings and derelict plots of land to meet the need of some poorest families in the city. These occupations have often been met with violence on the part of the police.

The Olga Benário eviction came following the failure of the government to provide adequate solutions after over a year of negotiations and several appeals against the eviction order. The best offer the municipal authorities offered the families were places in council hostels, which the families rejected because it was short-term and would break up the families, separating women and children from their husbands.

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